

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATOR KARA HAHN



FIFTH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

June 6, 2013

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BON VOYAGE!

Eelgrass saplings set sail in effort to import Long Island Sound ecosystem

Port Jefferson, New York – As a small boat pulled out from Port Jefferson Harbor early yesterday, for Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn it marked the conclusion of a community effort, but also the beginning of a new chapter in the life of the Long Island Sound. On board, divers from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County headed for the Harbor's western edge with discs of marine-life supporting eelgrass that was recently assembled by local volunteers during this past Saturday's Marine Meadows Program Workshop at the Port Jefferson Village Center.

Legislator Hahn partnered with Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County (CCE) and the Long Island Sound Study to offer the workshop that attracted nearly 30 local residents, families and children interested in learning about the importance of eelgrass to our marine environment and provided hands-on activities that helped to further restoration efforts in the region.

"Saturday was great. I love it when I get to see the excitement and wonder on a youngster's face the moment he or she discovers that the lesson is interesting and the work is important," said Legislator Hahn, Chairwoman of the Legislature's Environment, Planning and Agriculture Committee. "I am very proud to have had this opportunity to work with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the local community, and particularly our children, to improve the health of our

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waterways. Everyone who participated seems to have walked away with a new perspective on Long Island's unique marine ecosystem and ways to personally protect it."

During the workshop, participants weaved eelgrass shoots (harvested from healthy donor meadows in local waters) into burlap planting discs. Yesterday, those discs were brought back to Port Jefferson to be planted by CCE SCUBA divers at a carefully selected restoration site in Long Island Sound near Old Field Point. When planted, these newly created "marine meadows" serve as important marine habitat for many species of fish. These habitats, in turn, help enhance the health and productivity of the Sound and serve as important environment for both fish and shellfish.

Local eelgrass populations have been in decline in recent decades. The work done Saturday by community volunteers will allow for essential marine habitat to be restored in the Long Island Sound.

Chris Pickerell the Director of CCE's Marine Program said, "We are fortunate to have incredible partners in Suffolk County, Legislator Hahn, the Long Island Sound Study and the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation to make this important work possible. I am happy to say that through our combined efforts we will be able to make meaningful and significant strides in bringing back this important species."

To date, CCE and various partners have facilitated numerous workshops in which over 600 volunteers have come together to assemble nearly 70,000 shoots of eelgrass into planting discs for use in restoration efforts. For more information on Cornell Cooperative Extension's overall seagrass conservation efforts, please visit www.seagrassli.org.

"Though Saturday's workshop was short in duration, its message will forever remain in the hearts and minds of each participant," Legislator Hahn concluded. "And the work done by the hands of everyone involved will be an enduring legacy on our environment."

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High resolution photos can be downloaded from: <http://suffolkcountyny.gov/do5/photogallery.aspx> or requested by calling (631) 854-1650.



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and organizers of the Marine Meadows Workshop from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County stop for a photo during the Saturday, June 1, 2013 event in Port Jefferson. June 1, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Seth Squicciarino



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and daughter Hope assemble Eelgrass disks during the Marine Meadows Workshop held at the Port Jefferson Village Center. June 1, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Seth Squicciarino



Children at the Marine Meadows Workshop carefully weave Eelgrass into burlap disks with Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn. June 1, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Seth Squicciarino



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and daughter Hope assemble Eelgrass disks with other volunteers during the Marine Meadows Workshop held at the Port Jefferson Village Center. June 1, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Seth Squicciarino



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn and SCUBA divers from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County pose with a finished Eelgrass disk shortly before departing from Port Jefferson Harbor. June 5, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Debbie Tinnirello



Suffolk County Legislator Kara Hahn holds a finished Eelgrass disk shortly before SCUBA divers from Cornell Cooperative Extension of Suffolk County depart Port Jefferson Harbor. June 5, 2013. PHOTO CREDIT: Debbie Tinnirello